

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/125399>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

TITLE PAGE

**Carefree conferences? Academics with caring responsibilities performing mobile
academic subjectivities**

ARTICLE ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION IN *GENDER AND EDUCATION* JOURNAL
ON 29th AUGUST 2019

CITATION:

Henderson, E. F. & Moreau, M.-P. (In Press). Carefree conferences? Academics with caring responsibilities performing mobile academic subjectivities. *Gender and Education*.

Emily F. Henderson (corresponding author)

Centre for Education Studies
University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 7AL
UK
Email: e.henderson@warwick.ac.uk

Marie-Pierre Moreau

Faculty of Health, Education, Medicine and Social Care
Anglia Ruskin University
Cambridge
CB1 1PT
UK
Email: marie-pierre.moreau@anglia.ac.uk

Carefree conferences? Academics with caring responsibilities performing mobile academic subjectivities

Abstract

This article explores how academics with caring responsibilities negotiate the mobility imperative, with specific reference to attending conferences. We argue that, in the neoliberal and ‘careless’ context of higher education (Lynch, 2010), negotiating conflicting identities of academic and carer is fraught with tensions for carers as they try to reconcile the mobility imperative with their caring responsibilities. We acknowledge and also challenge the naturalised relationship between care and femininity, and use a feminist poststructuralist approach to analyse the competing discourses surrounding academic and care work. We draw on two distinct, but related, research projects with predominantly UK-based participants. Moreau’s project (‘Carers and Careers’, 2015-17) explored how academic carers negotiate academic cultures which tend to render care work invisible, using interviews with academic carers and policy staff. Henderson’s project (‘In Two Places at Once’, 2017-18) focused on the impact of caring responsibilities on academics’ conference participation, using diary-interview method.

Keywords

Conferences; academic work; care; mobility; gender

Introduction

The international policy context that shapes the academic profession is driven by two contradictory imperatives in contemporary academia. Firstly, there is the requirement to internationalise academia – to be more outward-facing, to engage in academic mobility (Kim,

2014; Kim & Locke, 2010; Maadad & Tight, 2014). The internationalisation obligation is embedded in the increasing prevalence of international rankings, the rise of transnational higher education, and the politics of international research funding and collaboration (Brooks & Waters, 2017; Kim, 2017; Lebeau & Papatsiba, 2016). Secondly, there is the imperative to diversify the academic workforce, which is marked by increasing attention on the disparities between a student body that is diversifying, and the academic profession, which is slower to change, particularly in the senior ranks (David, 2014; Leathwood & Read, 2009). These two agendas clash in numerous ways, including where the internationalisation imperative meets other political agendas, such as border politics, the casualisation of the academic workforce and major cuts to and the privatisation of social care. In this article, we focus on one such contradiction where the academic mobility imperative clashes with the inclusion imperative: we explore how expectations of freely mobile academics intersect and conflict with the concurrent expectations that the profession should accommodate a diverse body of academics, with specific reference to academics with caring responsibilitiesⁱ.

The particular type of mobility that forms our focus is conference mobility. While conferences have been neglected in the literature on inequalities in the higher education sector, they are important sites for researching the academic profession (Henderson, 2015). Conferences are arguably only a minor feature of academic practice, yet they are also important sites for the development of research agendas (Bowles, 2002; McCulloch, 2012; Storberg-Walker, Wiessner & Chapman, 2005) and academic careers (Kyvik & Larsen, 1994; Rowe, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). As such access to conferences is an important research topic to incorporate into the contemporary research field of inequalities within the academic profession. Conferences demand a particular kind of mobility, which is temporary and transient and also broadly inflexible, as they usually require people's physical presence in a

particular place at a particular time. While attending conferences poses challenges for all academics for a number of reasons, such as workload, contract status and financial implications, for academics with caring responsibilities, conference mobility raises specific challenges (Henderson, Cao & Mansuy, 2018). By focusing on conferences and caring responsibilities, we are both discussing a highly specific phenomenon and are also using this phenomenon as a prism through which to consider the hidden assumptions of the academic profession at large. Where conferences meet care is, in our perspective, a gendered issue; we both recognise the naturalisation of the relationship between femininity and care work and challenge this naturalisation, acknowledging instead that this association and other gender binaries (eg. male/female, paid/unpaid work, rational/emotional) are socially constructed (Guillaumin, 1992).

Our core argument is that, in the neoliberal and 'careless' context of higher education (Lynch, 2010), performing mobile academic subjectivities is fraught with tensions for carers. As such, this article explores how academics with caring responsibilities negotiate the expectations associated with their profession in relation to mobility, with specific reference to attending conferences. On an empirical level, we draw on two distinct, but related, research projects, which are presented in more detail later in the article: 'Care and Careers' (Moreau & Robertson, 2017) and 'In Two Places at Once' (Henderson, Cao & Mansuy, 2018). We slot the two projects together to contextualise the specific features of conference mobility within wider issues affecting the academic profession. The article begins with a literature section that weaves together the academic mobility imperative, conferences and care, before the theoretical and methodological frameworks underpinning the article are introduced; we employ post-structuralist feminist analysis of academic subjectivity in contemporary academia as the key theoretical foundation. We then consider how academics with caring

responsibilities are positioned within and negotiate discourses of the mobility imperative, foregrounding access to conferences within this.

Mobile academics, care and conferences

The academic mobility imperative

The mobility of the academic workforce is a key priority for the UK and other national governments, as well as for supranational institutions such as the European Commission and the OECD.ⁱⁱ In recent years, in higher education, mobility has begun to be measured – as part of the international rankings explosion, for example. As explored within the GARCIAⁱⁱⁱ project (Herschberg, Benschop & van den Brink, 2018), academic mobility has become a criterion of excellence which is assessed in institutional academic recruitment processes. The mobility imperative is particularly present in the early career stages, and in certain disciplines (particularly sciences); in an increasingly casualised academic job market which is bursting with highly-qualified candidates, international post-doctoral experience is taking on the status of a required qualification in some subject areas (*ibid.*; Kim, 2017).

Conference mobility slots neatly into this wider mobility imperative, both as mobility in its own right (Henderson, 2015) and as leading to other connections and collaborations (Kyvik & Larsen, 1994; Rowe, 2018; Wang et al., 2017). Conferences occupy an ambivalent position within academic accountability structures. With the exception of invited keynotes, they do not tend to be considered in formal institutional processes (e.g. promotion or recruitment) as markers of success or esteem to the same degree as peer-reviewed publications or external research funding. It is nonetheless an expectation that academics present their work at conferences, and conferences also operate as both informal and formal sites for hiring in the

academic job market (Brink & Benschop, 2013; Oppermann, 1997). Conferences can perhaps be understood as wallpaper in the academic profession, upon which publications and grant applications are framed and hung. Conferences, then, are an opaque practice within the academic profession, and yet their informal importance within the academic prestige economy (Kandiko-Howson, Coate & de St Croix, 2018) points to a hidden conference mobility imperative that is buried beneath other accountability measures.

Care, conferences and the mobility imperative

Where there is a mobility imperative, there is also mobility inequality, and this is where the mobility imperative collides with the second imperative of interest to this article: the inclusion imperative. Accounts of the academic profession show that academic mobility is exclusionary in a number of ways, including from a social class perspective (Kastberg, 2014) and particularly in relation to gender (Leemann, 2010; Jöns, 2011). Examining the mobility imperative is a way of revealing the assumptions which continue to underpin notions of an ‘ideal’ academic, a highly privileged and elite construct whose subject is free to move anywhere, at any time (Parker & Weik, 2014), and who is able to dedicate body and soul to the profession. This construct is gendered towards the traditional masculine-heteronormative norm, as central to this construct is either a perennial bachelor or a male academic with a wife who tends to the home – in other words, the ‘ideal’ academic construct is ‘care-free’ (Grummell, Devine & Lynch, 2009; Moreau & Robertson, 2017; Hook, 2016). Because care is still predominantly understood as a feminine construct (Lynch, 2010), this creates a structural contradiction which tends to be most acutely experienced by women in a hyphenated academic-carer identity.

While literature on gender and mobile work generally includes reference to care as an impediment to mobility (Viry, Vincent-Geslin and Kaufmann, 2015), studies of care and careers in the academic profession tend to focus predominantly on conflicts between institutional rhythms and expectations, and care rhythms and expectations, instead of focusing on extra-institutional matters such as conferences. For example in Hook's (2016) study of sole-parents who are doctoral students in Australia, university timetables conflicted with childcare schedules, but campus premises were not welcoming to children who therefore needed to accompany their parents to university activities. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2012) found that US women academics try to align their pregnancy timescales with nine-month contracts and semester dates in order to avoid taking time off work for childbirth; they also found that, if they do take maternity leave, they see this period as potential research time – and are sometimes penalised by tenure committees if they have not made use of this time. In their study of UK academics, Moreau & Robertson (2017) found that carers are particularly affected by the mobility imperative in its various aspects (i.e. from attending conferences to moving from post-doc to post-doc), although these effects vary depending on the nature of caring responsibilities and the level of resources available to each carer in the form of social and economic capitals. In each of these studies, the mobility imperative appears as just one facet of the academic profession that collides with caring responsibilities. Some studies have specifically researched the relationship between the mobility imperative and caring responsibilities, such as Loveridge, Doyle and Faamanatu-Eteuati's (2018) study of postgraduate students-parents' international mobility and Brooks' research on international students with dependent children (Brooks, 2015). Yet these focus on students rather than academic staff.

While studies in this research field frequently mention conferences in passing, the relationship between conference mobility and caring responsibilities rarely appears to be considered as a research topic in its own right. Conference mobility is accompanied by its own challenges for academics with caring responsibilities. Unlike regular commuting, which lends itself to the formation of a regular care routine (Ralph, 2015; Willis et al., 2017), conferences constitute an interruption to the care routine, particularly as they do not occur in a regular pattern, and each conference requires its own tailor-made solution for care. Existing studies have shown that there are challenges (as well as some pleasures) involved in being accompanied to conferences by children (Lipton, 2018; Hook, 2016) or partners (Yoo, McIntosh & Cockburn-Wooten, 2016), while ensuring the smooth provision of care for non-accompanying caring responsibilities poses its own set of challenges (Henderson, 2019).

Researching and theorising academic careers, care and mobility

The analyses presented in this article arise from two separate research projects: a study of academics with caring responsibilities (‘Care and Careers’, hence referred to as CAC) and a study of how caring responsibilities play out in relation to access to and participation in conferences (‘In Two Places at Once’, hence referred to as I2PO).

‘Carers and careers: Career development and access to leadership positions among academic staff with caring responsibilities’ (2016-17, funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education) was a qualitative, exploratory study researching the experiences of academics with caring responsibilities (Moreau & Robertson, 2017). The project gave specific attention to how caring responsibilities and university cultures play out in the career progression and broader life experiences of academics. Drawing on a case study approach, the research team conducted the fieldwork in three England-based institutions, which included different types

of institution in different areas of the country to ensure the breadth of the sample. Thus, these institutions constituted a contrasting sample, in terms of status and geographical location. A desk search was conducted, which involved reading the material available on institutional websites and asking interviewees to provide us with policy documents related to carers. An open call was circulated in each institution; a snow-balling method supplemented this. In total, five members of staff in a policy position/role and 27 academic carers were interviewed (i.e. 31 interviews – one member of staff was interviewed in both capacities). This paper focuses on the interviews with academics to align with Project 1. The recruitment of academic carers was monitored so as to ensure maximum diversity, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, nature of caring responsibilities, subject and position, with mixed success, for example there was difficulty in balancing the sample in relation to gender and ethnicity. Among the participants in an academic position, sixteen identified as female, 11 as male. Fifteen identified as White British, one as Mixed Race, and 11 as from another background considered as ‘White other’ in the UK census. A broad range of positions, subject background and caring responsibilities were represented (see sample description in Moreau & Robertson, 2017, which specifies gender, age group, position, subject area and caring responsibilities of the participants).

Like CAC, Like the ‘Carers and Careers’ project, ‘In Two Places at Once: the Impact of Caring Responsibilities on Academics’ Conference Participation’ was a qualitative, exploratory study which set out to discover how caring responsibilities play a role in academics’ access to and participation in conferences (2017-18, funded by the University of Warwick). The study used a version of the diary-interview method (Bartlett, 2012; Bartlett & Milligan, 2015), where participants kept a solicited diary (i.e. a time-log that was specifically produced for the research) during a conference of their choice to record their thoughts and

practices related to caring responsibilities. The diary was later used as a prompt in an in-depth interview, which included discussion of the time-log questionnaire and participants' general practices relating to conference attendance. Following the issuing of a call for interviewees on academic mailing lists, 20 participants were recruited on a first come, first served basis, with an additional nine participants filling in the time-log questionnaire only. 19/20 interviewees and 8/9 questionnaire respondents were women, which reflects the strict 'first come, first served' recruitment process. For 20 participants, the UK was the country of residence, but the sample also included Australia (5), US (2), Austria (1), Canada (1). Conferences varied from one to six days and participants' engagement varied from attending as invited speakers, to giving presentations based on accepted abstracts, to attending to listen and learn. Participants ranged from doctoral students to professors. Primary caring responsibilities included children (25 participants), animals (9), partners (6), parents (5), but also included a sibling, a friend, and a children's club. Several participants listed as primary caring responsibilities a combination of two (8 participants) or three (5) of the above categories.

The combination of these two projects confers a broader scope to our discussions by enabling us to incorporate data constructed through a range of methods and through our interactions with a diverse sample of individuals. Moreover it locates the more micro-social data of I2PO against the broader context of the relationship between carers and academia explored by CAC.

Academic-carer mobile subjects – a feminist poststructuralist approach

The research projects which underpin this article share a common understanding of care, where care is defined as multifaceted, dynamic and shifting within each day and over the

course of whole lives, and as something people ‘do’ rather than are (Tronto & Fisher, 1990). Care is also intrinsically relational: people are simultaneously engaged in multiple reciprocal relationships of care (Barnes, 2011). We address care as a political phenomenon, which is affected by policy change; we note that, consistent with a long-lasting view of caring matters as a ‘private’ matter, in the UK where most of the participants of our two studies are based, families are expected to ‘take responsibility’ for their own caring needs, whether this caring work is dealt with internally or delegated to a private sector whose provision is both scarce and costly (Boffey, 2015; Gainsbury & Neville, 2015). Care intersects with other relations of power, and furthermore experiences of carers are mediated by other intersecting aspects of identities (Moreau & Robertson, 2017). We posit that care is often culturally associated with femininity, and we simultaneously challenge the normalisation of this association (Crompton, 1999; Lynch, 2010) and recognise its prevalence in the ways in which our participants interpreted our respective research projects. It is also important to note that studies of the relationship between care and academic identities (including academic mobilities) are prevailingly focused on parenting, especially given the current discourses of intensive parenting and of the hyper-productive ‘superhuman mother’ (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), with limited consideration for other types of caring responsibilities. The literature also tends to be underpinned by conventional, heteronormative and Northern-centric views of who counts as ‘a carer’ and what constitutes ‘a family’ (Moreau & Robertson, 2017). To acknowledge the diversity of care work and of the circumstances of those who ‘do’ care, both projects engaged with participants who self-defined as ‘carers’. In this article, we posit that academic carers are positioned at the intersection of several discourses which often conflict with each other, for example when they are expected to meet the expectations of availability associated with doing care work and the expectations of mobility associated with doing academic work.

We frame this theoretical approach as a feminist poststructuralist stance, where we understand identities to be constructed, negotiated and performed through discourse, rather than as fixed and stable (Butler, 1997; Davies et al., 2006). We understand discourse as operating at two different but interwoven levels, which are illustrated in the following quotation:

All subjects are produced not only through *dominant discourses* and regulatory practices but also through the opening up of new possibilities in language (Davies, 2000). All subjects – including the transformed (or more correctly, the transforming) poststructuralist subject, who is capable of critically analysing the *constitutive force of discourse* – are always inside language. To change discourse is also, at least in part, at least for the moment, to change oneself. (Davies et al., 2006, 90, emphasis added).

'Dominant discourses' are ways of framing certain issues which circulate in society and come to shape how phenomena are understood and how people come to act. At this level, we take into account dominant discourses which shape the enactment of care in academia, such as the naturalisation of care as feminine, the discourse of the superhuman mother (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012), and the conflation of mobility with excellence. At the second level, discourse is understood as having a 'constitutive force' where identity is negotiated and conferred at the micro-level of discursive expression (Butler, 1997). In this understanding of discourse, discourse refers to any form of communication (or non-communication), and the premise is that discourse can be analysed for the ways in which subjects' identities and realities are shaped by un/available language. The two levels are inherently linked as dominant discourses shape the available terms in which a subject is rendered il/legible, and in turn dominant discourses can be challenged through discursive resistance.

For the purposes of this article, we have re-analysed our interview data to reflect this analytical stance. We selected data from both studies that included a discursive negotiation of the carer/academic role, i.e. where both roles were mentioned, and where dominant discourses of the mobility imperative and care expectations were reflected. In CAC, we also identified instances where conferences were discussed, to explore the overlap between the two studies. In I2PO, we focused on examples where the interviewees discussed specific moments of the academic/carers role negotiation at conferences, to gain a deeper understanding of how this negotiation plays out in the everydayness of academic experience. This focus on the minutiae of mobility is important in feminist analyses of academia because it is through analyses of micropolitics that we can understand the fabric of structural inequality (Morley, 1999). Finally, a feminist poststructuralist approach entails working with our interview data as both representing participants' lives and also enacting the negotiation of discourses within the interview as a site of discursive construction (Phoenix, 2010).

Academics with caring responsibilities performing mobile academic subjectivities

Academic-carer roles – conflicting dominant discourses

Our research on academics who are carers revealed the fraught relationship between care and academia, as academic-carers' hyphenated identities require that they meet the demands of two 'greedy institutions' (Coser, 1974): university and the family. The resulting conflict was succinctly conveyed by CAC participant Martha (Research Fellow, caring for child and elderly parents), who explained:

I'm in that age [30s] where you're really expected to exploit this moment in your life a lot, for your career, and at the same time it's the time in my life when my child is smallest and potentially needs me more. So there is this mismatch. So no wonder I feel pressurised.

Neoliberal discourses of academia tend to construct academic jobs as flexible, with the assumption that this flexibility enables the swift combination of academia with other commitments (Manfredi & Holliday, 2004). However, the spatiality and temporality of academic work – and associated degree of flexibility – are closely related to position and role, with some positions and roles making it harder for carers to maintain an academic identity (Moreau & Robertson, 2017). Leadership and management roles in particular were constructed as ‘care-free’ and ‘out of reach’ for CAC participants. Moreover, this flexibility, combined with a culture of long hours, tends to encourage fuzzy boundaries (Hochschild, 1997) as academic work impinges upon individuals’ ‘personal’ space and life, and as personal matters often infringe upon academic matters, as was the case among participants in both studies. In a competitive, output-based rather than process-based environment, such flexibility can also lead to long working hours (Teelken & Deem, 2013) and to a ceaseless mental burden (Haicault, 1984). CAC participant Jess (Head of Department, carer to children and grandchild), for example, alluded to this mental burden when explaining: ‘you never switch off’.

CAC participants often spoke of ‘battling’ an academic, care-free culture geared towards those with no significant caring responsibilities, whether they referred to institutional policies which were seen as particularly hostile to carers (e.g. timetabling policies) or to inter-individual practices (e.g. feeling marginalised after coming back from parental leave).

Women in particular talked of their struggle in occupying a positional identity as an academic and a carer in an environment which associates the dominant discourse of the ideal worker with hegemonic, care-free masculinity (Lynch, 2010; Lynch, Baker & Lyons, 2009) and links care work with femininity (Scott, Crompton & Lyonette, 2010). Pauline (CAC, Professor, carer to children and elderly parents), for example, explained:

When I was pregnant with my son we had a really interesting head of department who didn't think women should work if they had children... And he said so, loudly, several times and that was quite stressful. He would shout at me. He would tell me I would be a bad mother if I considered coming back to work after I'd had my first child.

Disrupting the care-free, masculinist norms of academia which construct academic carers through deficit discourses often came at a price for carers in the CAC. This cost was experienced at various levels. On a temporal level, they had limited time for activities outside paid and care work (Stadelmann-Steffen & Oehrli, 2017). On a financial level, their dual status bore a heavy cost for those at the bottom of the academic hierarchy and on precarious (i.e. fixed term) contracts. On a psychosocial level, their positioning at the intersection of several conflicting discourses often led to equally conflicted feelings, with mental and physical illnesses often mentioned and linked in their narratives to their attempts to reconcile their identities as academic and carer.

Academics, care and the mobility imperative – negotiating discursive contradictions

Participants in both studies articulated their negotiation of the mobility imperative in their interviews. In the interview transcripts, data relating to the negotiation of the mobility imperative in relation to competing demands of care can be identified where participants expressed the constraints on their mobility within the interview setting. For example, Kat (CAC), a Professor who was caring for her partner who suffered from a chronic illness, used two forms of mobility, conferences and visiting fellowships, as discursive markers to highlight her constrained mobility:

That's certainly something I find harder to do now [that partner's health has declined], so I'm more choosy about the *conferences* that I go to and have to plan much more

ahead of time how that’s going to happen. So things like... going and having a *visiting professor position*... I did it two years ago for six weeks... At this stage in time I wouldn’t do that again. So I think one of the restrictions is that aspect of academic life which is about being about and visiting different places. (Emphasis added)

Kat’s interview lays out markers of what is and has been possible in terms of mobility. Her account includes temporal conditions (‘much more ahead of time’, ‘this stage in time’) which are all relative, and which reflect not only the dynamic nature of care but also the dynamic negotiation of caregiver and academic identities. The relative nature of these conditions was clearly demonstrated in I2PO, where participants articulated common notions of prohibitive distance (how far is too far to travel?), and yet the geographical boundaries of distance varied hugely between participants. Within Kat’s (CAC) account of constraint, which is framed in terms of obligation (‘have to’, ‘wouldn’t’), we can also discern a discourse of choice, where Kat is obliged to be ‘choosy’ about the conferences she attends. In the participants’ accounts in I2PO, a dominant discourse of choice arose in particular in relation to mobility activities rather than other paid work activities or care. While other paid work activities and care were both framed in terms of obligation, conferences and related mobility activities were constructed as a contradictory hybrid of optional and even luxury status as well as essential for career success (Henderson, 2018).

It was clear from both studies that participants struggled to justify to themselves why they could take time away from caring (and sometimes cause significant disruption by doing so) for activities that were not strictly part of their remit. The ‘time famine’ (Perlow, 1999) experienced by carers led participants to frame attending a conference as a problem or as an impossibility. The combination of ongoing ‘time famine’ with planning to engage in a quasi-optional yet career-defining activity had further implications when justifying mobility

activities to partners, co-carers and other members of their social networks, who sometimes questioned the benefits of attending conferences and other forms of academic travel. In I2PO, these family dynamics played out in different ways – in one example, a participant’s partner took a holiday as ‘pay back’ for being the sole carer at home during a conference; in another example, a participant who was a doctoral student was under pressure from her husband to find a job during the conference, in part because they had invested so much money and energy in her attending the event.

The hybrid status of conferences as both optional and essential resulted in complicated cost-benefit analyses both prior to and during the conference. For example, Graeme (CAC, Senior Lecturer and father of one child) articulated a cost-benefit analysis about his conference participation practice using the discourse of choice:

around the time Noah [my son] was born I stopped really dedicating weekends to go to conferences too. I just felt like, you're going to have to make choices, I'm away from him a lot during the week; I feel like conferences weren't *the hugest greatest value for money for me*. So inevitably *that affects your profile, your network and all those kinds of things*. That’s the reality, I'm not surprised about that, nor am I regretful, but that was a definitely conscious choice. (Emphasis added)

In this excerpt, Graeme exemplifies the challenge of justifying conference attendance within the conceptualisation of conferences as both optional and essential. He both states that conferences are not ‘the hugest value for money’ and also notes the adverse effect of *not* attending upon ‘your profile, your network’. This excerpt demonstrates the discursive contradictions that are inimical to the hyphenated academic-carer identity, where an apparently logical justification, framed with an agentic construction of choice (‘have to make choices’, ‘definitely a conscious choice’), also belies a cost-benefit analysis that cannot add

up. However it should be noted that the framing of conferences as a choice varied among I2PO participants; for example one participant, an early career lecturer on a temporary contract with a young child, took the opportunity to go on a funded research trip including two conferences

because you don't quite know what opportunities you should be part of and there's a fear that if I say no to something then I'll be saying no to some aspect of my future career.

Here she framed her negotiation of the status of conferences as choice/obligation within a larger discourse of 'early career uncertainty', where career uncertainty resulted in risk adversity and mobility opportunities being weighted towards obligation rather than choice.

As mentioned above, the framing of conferences through a discourse of choice relates to their hybrid status as both optional and essential. This was further highlighted by the recognition of conferences as spaces of self-care, particularly when caring responsibilities were not accompanying academics to conferences, and as opportunities to 'indulge' in performing a single-focus academic identity. As such, conferences were experienced as luxury time that was also tinged with guilt:

on one side I have to say that, with three kids, it's a bit resting to be away, so it's nice to be able to focus on mainly, mainly focus on one thing...but at the same time you know my responsibilities don't disappear and I feel guilty of leaving, especially because it's difficult for my husband because he works also at the same time so it's difficult to do it all by himself then. (I2PO, Doctoral student, three children)

In this excerpt, the discursive contradiction becomes apparent through the participant's depiction of conferences as providing time and space to 'rest' and 'mainly focus on one thing'. They simultaneously recognise the multidimensionality of care (Lynch et al., 2009)

when stating that ‘responsibilities don’t disappear’ and when admitting to feelings of guilt. In this excerpt we see a direct negotiation between the aforementioned careless, ‘greedy institutions’ of academia and the family.

The diary-interview method employed in the I2PO study generated rich data showing how academics with caring responsibilities negotiate this conflicting subject position while at the conference. These data appear to be on the mundane, perhaps seemingly insignificant processes of participants’ lives, but the significance becomes clear when this data is used to complement the career-wide data from CAC. For it is these mundane, everyday processes that form the material conditions for participants’ negotiations of the hyphenated academic-carer identity, which are then compounded into structural inequality (Morley, 1999). The micro-level data focus on particular moments at the conference where the spatio-temporal regimes of care and academic work coincided; these moments were recorded on the time-logs which participants completed while at a conference (see methodology section above), and then these moments prompted further discussion in the post-conference interviews.

For example, one I2PO participant, a senior lecturer with two small children and an elderly dog, noted on her time-log that she received a text from her parents, who were caring for her children for part of the time she was away, and that this ‘was in the midst of a conversation with a new contact’. In the interview, we discussed this moment in more detail, to understand how the interruption occurred:

I saw the beginning of the message and saw that it was from my mum, but there wasn’t enough there to convey that it, you know, I didn’t need to check it, and so I said to the person, ‘Oh look, sorry, I’ve just got to check this message from my parents who are,’ I explained, ‘looking after my two children,’ and...I had a quick

look. I didn't reply to it at that point, I just put the phone away again and left it at that, but I completely forgot what I was talking about.

The participant wore a sports watch which vibrated against her wrist when a new message came in – a physical reminder of her caring responsibilities. This was a strategy that enabled her to manage her hybrid role of academic-carer, as she could forget about needing to check her phone (phone checking preoccupied many I2PO participants), knowing she would be automatically made aware when a new message came in. However the watch only displayed the start of the text message, so if the urgency of the message was unclear, she had to retrieve her phone to read the full message.

This micro-moment shows the disruption of networking with a new contact, and allows us to extrapolate from this the long-term effects of repeated versions of this scenario (Morley, 1999), where conflicting demands of care and academic work produce impossible choices for academics who are carers. When explored across the data from I2PO, it is clear how numerous and varied these moments of negotiating the hybrid role are. At times the moments are invisible. For example, a participant, a doctoral student whose partner was on an international trip in another time zone, and whose mother had just been diagnosed with breast cancer, recorded her distracted attention at the conference she was attending on the time log: 'Was aware during the keynote that I was missing my chance to speak to my partner... Found myself weighing up whether the keynote was worth it'. Another participant, an associate professor who had relatively recently adopted two rescue cats, experienced difficulties with her cat-sitter and spent a morning of the conference communicating with her by text before ultimately having to leave the conference early to travel home. At other times, such as the sports watch incident above, the negotiation between the two roles is more visible and enters into the realm of the performance of an in/appropriate academic identity. A participant who

was an associate professor on a complicated multi-country trip, in part accompanied by his wife and daughter, discussed in detail a moment of the conference he was attending during the trip, where a Skype call with his daughter (who became distressed as he tried to end the call) resulted in arriving 30 minutes late for a session and in fact missing the contribution from his ‘main collaborator’ at the conference. Even while recording the incident on the form the participant expressed the emotional toll of negotiating between conference and care – and ultimately losing in both regards, stating ‘Still a bit teary as I write. What is the right thing to do in these circumstances?’. The data from I2PO is a rich source of invisible and visible micro-moments of the negotiation of the hybrid academic-carer role, which show just how challenging conference mobility – and the mobility imperative in general – is for academics who have caring responsibilities.

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that, where there is a mobility imperative, there is also mobility inequality which conflicts with the inclusivity imperative. In neoliberal terms, this inclusivity imperative is often equated with the need to provide equal opportunities to citizens and is constructed as instrumental in the global quest for economic growth and competitiveness. Extant literature and policies have sometimes considered how im/mobilities are framed by gender, but care as a distinct but related phenomenon has rarely been addressed in its own right; this further reinforces the conflation of care issues with (feminine) gendered subjectivities. The silence surrounding care is even more characteristic of the literature on conferences. Drawing on two separate, yet related, projects, CAC (Moreau & Robertson, 2017) and I2PO (Henderson, Cao & Mansuy, 2018), we have highlighted how academic carers negotiate conference mobility and the mobility imperative in the context of the ‘careless’ academic profession. We have shown that they often struggle in performing mobile

academic subjectivities, both in relation to attending conferences at all and, when they do attend, to fit with the ideal, care-free construct of the academic delegate.

Conferences are a key site in the development of academic research fields and academics' careers, but they are demonstrably exclusionary sites for academics with caring responsibilities across the spectrum of care that includes partners, children, other relatives, pets, friends and kin (Henderson, 2019; Henderson, Cao & Mansuy, 2018). While this article has focused on care, there is also evidence of the exclusionary nature of conferences with regards to disability (Hodge, 2014) and deafness (O'Brien, 2018), race (Ahmed, 2012), class (Stanley, 1995), and gender (Eden, 2016; Walters, 2018). As such, an intersectional analysis of inequalities of conference mobility would be a valuable addition to the field, particularly as, despite our efforts to the contrary, many of these intersecting complexities were not reflected in the participant sample in our two studies. There are also further subtleties to explore with regards to care and the mobility imperative, such as differences between disciplines, institutions, and country contexts. However we also recognise that, for both of these potential research directions, there is an ethical issue to consider surrounding participant anonymisation. Because of the ongoing silence surrounding care in academia, many participants in studies of the kinds that we conducted do not wish to be identifiable as carers, yet it is difficult to ensure full anonymity when more specific characteristics – intersectional or institutional – are explored. However arguably there is an urgent need for further exploration of these issues, given the importance of conferences and other forms of mobility in the development of successful academic careers.

Acknowledgements

‘Carers and careers: Career development and access to leadership positions among academic staff with caring responsibilities’ was funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Marie-Pierre Moreau would like to thank Murray Robertson who was a Research Assistant on this project. ‘In Two Places at Once: the Impact of Caring Responsibilities on Academics’ Conference Participation’ was funded by the University of Warwick Research Development Fund and Institute of Advanced Studies. Emily Henderson would like to thank Julie Mansuy and Xuemeng Cao for their work as Research Assistants in the two phases of the project. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful feedback.

References

- Ahmed, S. 2012. *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Barnes, M. 2011. “Caring responsibilities: The making of citizen carers”. In *Participation, Responsibility and Choice. Summoning the Active Citizen in Western European Welfare States*, edited by J.E. Newman and E. Tonkens, 161-178. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Bartlett, R. 2012. “Modifying the Diary Interview Method to Research the Lives of People With Dementia.” *Qualitative Health Research* 22 (12): 1717-1726.
- Bartlett, R., C. Milligan. 2015. *What is diary method?* London: Bloomsbury.
- Boffey, D. 2015. “Half of All Services Now Failing as UK Care Sector Crisis Deepens.” *The Guardian*, 26 September. Available at:
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/sep/26/nearly-half-social-care-services-failing-uk-elderly-disabled-welfare> [Last accessed 17 Jan 2017].
- Bowles, G. 2002. “Putting Our Heads Together: Some Personal Recollections of NWSA National Conventions, 1979-1983.” *NWSA Journal* 14 (1): 124.

- Brink, M., and Y. Benschop. 2013. "Gender in Academic Networking: The Role of Gatekeepers in Professorial Recruitment." *Journal of Management Studies* 51 (3): 460-492.
- Brooks, R. 2015. "International students with dependent children: the reproduction of gender norms." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 36 (2): 195-214.
- Brooks, R., and J. Waters. 2017. *Materialities and Mobilities in Education*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. 1997. *Excitable Speech: A politics of the performative*. London: Routledge.
- Coser, L. 1974 *Greedy Institutions*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Crompton, R. 1999. *Restructuring gender relations and employment: the decline of the male breadwinner*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- David, M. E. 2014. *Feminism, gender and universities: politics, passion and pedagogies*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Davies, B., J. Browne, S. Gannon, L. Hopkins, H. McCann and M. Wihlborg. 2006. "Constituting the Feminist Subject in Poststructuralist Discourse." *Feminism & Psychology* 16 (1): 87-103.
- Eden, D. 2016. "Women's participation in academic conferences in Israel." *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 38 (4): 406-421.
- Gainsbury, S., and S. Neville. 2015. "Austerity's £18bn Impact on Local Services". *Financial Times*, 19 July. Available at: <https://www.ft.com/content/5fcbd0c4-2948-11e5-8db8-c033edba8a6e>. [Last accessed 30 January 2017]
- Grummell, B., D. Devine and K. Lynch. 2009. "The care-less manager: gender, care and new managerialism in higher education." *Gender and Education* 21 (2): 191-208.
- Guillaumin, C. 1992. *Sexe, race et pratique du pouvoir. L'idée de nature*. Paris: Côté-Femmes.

- Haicault, M. 1984. "La gestion ordinaire de la vie en deux." *Sociologie du travail* 3: 268-277.
- Henderson, E. F. 2015. "Academic conferences: Representative and resistant sites for Higher Education Research." *Higher Education Research and Development* 34 (5): 914-925.
- Henderson, E. F. 2018. "Feminist conference time: aiming (not) to have been there". In *Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University: Feminist Flights, Fights and Failures*, edited by Y. Taylor and K. Lahad, 33-60. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Henderson, E. F. 2019. "Academics in Two Places at Once: (Not) Managing Caring Responsibilities at Conferences." In *Accessibility, Inclusion, and Diversity in Critical Events Studies*, edited by R. Finkel and B. Sharp, 218-229. London; New York: Routledge.
- Henderson, E. F., X. Cao, X. and J. Mansuy. 2018. *In Two Places at Once: The Impact of Caring Responsibilities on Academics' Conference Participation: Final Project Report*. Coventry: Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick. DOI: 10.31273/CES.06.2018.001
- Herschberg, C., Benschop, Y., & van den Brink, M. (2018). Selecting early-career researchers: the influence of discourses of internationalisation and excellence on formal and applied selection criteria in academia. *Higher Education*, 76(5), 807-825.
- Hochschild, A. 1997. *The time bind: when work becomes home and home becomes work*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Books.
- Hodge, N. 2014. "Unruly bodies at conference." *Disability & Society* 29 (4): 655-658.
- Hook, G. A. 2016. *Sole Parent Students and Higher Education: Gender, Policy and Widening Participation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Jöns, H. 2011. "Transnational academic mobility and gender". *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 9 (2): 183-209.
- Kandiko Howson, C. B., K. Coate and T. de St Croix. 2018. "Mid-career academic women and the prestige economy." *Higher Education Research & Development* 37 (3): 533-548.
- Kastberg, S. M. 2014. "'Sensitive fences': the im/mobility of working class academics". In *Academic mobility*, edited by N. Maadad and M. Tight, 219-242. Bingley: Emerald.
- Kim, T. 2014. "Internationalisation of higher education and global mobility." *Comparative Education* 50 (4): 507-509.
- Kim, T. 2017. "Academic mobility, transnational identity capital, and stratification under conditions of academic capitalism." *Higher Education* 73 (6): 981-997.
- Kim, T. and W. Locke. 2010. *Transnational academic mobility and the academic profession*. London: The Open University.
- Kyvik, S. and I.M. Larsen. 1994. "International contact and research performance." *Scientometrics* 29 (1): 161-172.
- Leathwood, C. and B. Read. 2009. *Gender and the changing face of higher education: A feminised future?*, Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.
- Lebeau, Y. and V. Papatsiba. 2016. "Conceptions and expectations of research collaboration in the European social sciences: Research policies, institutional contexts and the autonomy of the scientific field." *European Educational Research Journal* 15 (4): 377-394.
- Leemann, R. J. 2010. "Gender inequalities in transnational academic mobility and the ideal type of academic entrepreneur." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 31 (5): 605-625.
- Lipton, B. 2018. "Conference Baby: Gendered Bodies, Knowledge, and Re/Turning to

- Academia.” *Qualitative Inquiry* DOI: 1077800417752441.
- Loveridge, J., S. Doyle and N. Faamanatu-Eteuati. 2018. “Journeys across educational and cultural borders: international postgraduate students with young children.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 39 (3): 333-347.
- Lynch, K. 2010. ‘Carelessness: a hidden doxa of higher education’. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*. 9(1), 54–67.
- Lynch, K., J. Baker and M. Lyons. 2009. *Affective Equality: Love, Care and Injustice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maadad, N. and M. Tight. eds. 2014. *Academic mobility*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Manfredi, S. and M. Holliday. 2004. *Work-Life Balance: An Audit of Staff Experience at Oxford Brookes University*. Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.
- McCulloch, G. 2012. “The Standing Conference on Studies in Education, Sixty Years On.” *British Journal of Educational Studies* 60 (4): 301-316.
- Moreau, M.P. and M. Robertson. 2017. *Careers and carers: career development and access to leadership positions among academic staff with caring responsibilities*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.
- Morley, L. 1999. *Organising feminisms: The micropolitics of the academy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- O’Brien, D. 2018. “The deaf delegate – experiences of space and time in the conference.” [Blog] *Conference Inference*. 2 July 2018. Available at: <https://conferenceinference.wordpress.com/2018/07/02/guest-post-by-dai-obrien-the-deaf-delegate-experiences-of-space-and-time-in-the-conference-bsl-version-included/> [Accessed 9 July 2018].
- Oppermann, M. 1997. “Tourism conferences—academic titillation, social interactions or job market?” *Tourism Management* 18 (5): 255-257.

- Parker, M. and E. Weik. 2014. "Free spirits? The academic on the aeroplane." *Management Learning* 45 (2): 167-181.
- Perlow, L. 1999. *The Time Famine: Towards a Sociology of Work Time*. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 44(1): 57–81.
- Phoenix, A. 2010. "Suppressing intertextual understandings: Negotiating Interviews and analysis". In *Secrecy and Silence in the Research Process: Feminist Reflections*, edited by R. Ryan-Flood and R. Gill, 161-176. London: Routledge.
- Ralph, D. 2015. *Work, family and commuting in Europe: the lives of Euro-commuters*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Rowe, N. 2018. " 'When You Get What You Want, But Not What You Need': The Motivations, Affordances and Shortcomings of Attending Academic/Scientific Conferences." *International Journal of Research in Education and Science* 4 (2): 714-729.
- Scott, J., R. Crompton and C. Lyonette. eds. 2010. *Gender Inequalities in the 21st Century: New Barriers and Continuing Constraints*. London: Elgar.
- Stadelmann-Steffen, I. and D. Oehrli. 2017. "Perceiving Reconciliation: Child Care Policies and Gendered Time Conflicts." *Gender & Society* 31 (5): 597-623.
- Stanley, J. 1995. "Pain(t) for healing: the academic conference and the classed/embodied self". In *Feminist academics: creative agents for change*, edited by V. Walsh and L. Morley, 169-182. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Storberg-Walker, J., C.A. Wiessner and D. Chapman. 2005. "How the AHRD 2005 conference created new learning: Preliminary results of a case study." *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 16 (4): 547-555.
- Teelken, C. and R. Deem. 2013. "All are Equal, but Some are More Equal than Others: Managerialism and Gender Equality in Higher Education in Comparative

- Perspective.” *Comparative Education* 49(4): 520-535.
- Tronto, J. and B. Fisher. 1990. “Towards a feminist theory of caring”. In *Circles of Care: Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, edited by E. K. Abel and M. Nelson, 35-62. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Viry, G., S. Vincent-Geslin and V. Kaufmann, V. 2015. 'Family development and high mobility: gender inequality'. In *High mobility in Europe : work and personal life*, edited by G. Viry and V. Kaufmann, 153-179. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walters, T. 2018. “Gender equality in academic tourism, hospitality, leisure and events conferences.” *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events* 10 (1): 17-32.
- Wang, W., X. Bai, F. Xia, T.M. Bekele, X. Su and A. Tolba. 2017. “From triadic closure to conference closure: the role of academic conferences in promoting scientific collaborations.” *Scientometrics* 113 (1): 177-193.
- Ward, K. and L. Wolf-Wendel. 2012. *Academic motherhood: how faculty manage work and family*. New Brunswick, NJ, & London: Rutgers University Press.
- Willis, C., A. Ladkin, J. Jain and W. Clayton. 2017. “Present whilst absent: Home and the business tourist gaze”. *Annals of Tourism Research* 63 (Supplement C): 48-59.
- Yoo, H., A. McIntosh and C. Cockburn-Wootten. 2016. “Time for me and time for us: conference travel as alternative family leisure.” *Annals of Leisure Research* 19 (4): 444-460.

Notes

ⁱ In this article we use the term ‘caring responsibilities’ to broadly include any people or animals for whom academics have some responsibility, with ‘care’ defined broadly as physical or emotional and ‘responsibility’ understood to include direct dependents as well as other attachments.

ⁱⁱ For example: the European Commission Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships; OECD Conference Sponsorship; Association of Commonwealth Universities Fellowships; Newton Fund mobility grants; British Academy mobility funding.

ⁱⁱⁱ ‘Gendering the Academy and Research: combating Career Instability and Asymmetries’, an EU-funded project.